CIA Chief Spent Days On Hill

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Six days a week since mid-September the chauffeur-driven Chevrolet would pick up CIA Director William E. Colby at his suburban Maryland home and deliver him to the White House for the 9 a.m. briefings.

For the 55-year-old Colby the briefings with State, Defense and Justice Department officials in the White House situation room became another part of the depressing routine that developed as the inquiries into the intelligence agency's activities gained steam.

The last trip to the White House came Sunday when President Ford, according to a reliable source, told Colby his 25-year career as an intelligence officer was at an end and offered him the position of ambassador to NATO.

Colby's rejection of the offer was calm and dispassionate, a fitting finish for a man whose reputation has been built around the ability to remain cool under pressure.

"He's a very imperturbable fellow," a CIA official said yesterday, "whether the water's around his socks or his neck."

The water has been mounting almost since Colby took over at the CIA in 1973. By last week he was spending nearly half his time preparing to defend himself or the agency in front of a battery of hearings on Capitol Hill.

A CIA spokesman calculated yesterday that Colby had appeared before House and Senate committees at least 56 times to answer questions. During October and November of this year there are only six days when Colby or other CIA officials haven't been pencilled in to testify in open or closed session.

The rumors that Colby was to be replaced in the seventh floor director's office at CIA headquarters have been flying for months.

But until Mr. Ford's alternate job offer Sunday there was no official confirmation of Colby's departure.

WILLIAM E. COLBY
..."imperturbable"

Colby dropped out of Columbia University law school in 1941 after his first year, to join the Army Parachute Corps, eventually moving to the Office of Strategic Services under Gen. William (Wild Bill) Donovan and ending up parachuting behind the German lines at the age of 24 leading sabotage operations.

After two years with Donovan's law firm in New York City, Colby worked for the National Labor Relations Board in Washington and then in 1951 joined the CIA.

Colby's CIA career has included assignments in Stockholm and Rome but it was in the Far East and Vietnam that he became known to American journalists as head of the Vietnam pacification program and overseer of the Phoenix portion of the program designed to break the Vietcong infrastructure through imprisonment and assassination of suspected Vietcong.

Colby served two stints in Vietnam, returning to Langley in 1971 to head the Directorate of Plans, the CIA's ,'dirty tricks" department as it has been described by the agency's detractors.

His tenure as director since 1973 has been marked by an openness toward some aspects of the intelligence agency's operations.